

Decision and Finding of No Significant Impact

Managing Wildlife Hazards to Aviation at Civil Airports in Hawaii

United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services

September, 2007

1. Introduction

Civilian airport managers in the State of Hawaii have requested new and ongoing assistance from the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services program (Wildlife Services), to help alleviate wildlife aircraft strike hazards to protect people and property at airfields in Hawaii.

Wildlife Services cooperated with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Hawaii Department of Transportation, Airports Division (HDOT), Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources (HDLNR) and coordinated with the United States Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to develop an Environmental Assessment (EA) entitled Managing Wildlife Hazards to Aviation at Civil Airports in Hawaii. The EA and this Decision and Finding of No Significant Impact were prepared in compliance with Wildlife Services and Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The EA presents an analysis of the potential impacts of the proposed integrated wildlife hazard management program to assist civilian airports with requests for assistance at international and local airports and airfields on the islands of Oahu, Hawaii, Maui, Kauai, Lanai, and Molokai. The proposed action is the current WS integrated wildlife hazard management program and is considered the "no action" alternative as required by NEPA. No action in this case means no change from the current program. The proposed action was compared with a technical assistance alternative.

I have reviewed the September 2007 final EA and the public and agency comments received on the EA, and I have decided to adopt the proposed action and continue the integrated wildlife hazard management program as described in the EA, and to issue this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

2. Purpose

The purpose of the selected program is to assist airport managers and the FAA with alleviating wildlife strike hazards as described in the EA. The need for action as described in the EA presents the nature and extent of wildlife strikes and threats to aviation safety in Hawaii.

3. Issues

The following issues were identified during the NEPA process as important to Wildlife Services, the cooperating agencies and the public, and were used to drive the environmental analysis and compare the impacts of the alternatives.

- Impacts on target species
- Impacts on threatened and endangered species
- Effects on native species

4. Decision and Rationale

The alternative courses of action were developed based on the reasonable options that could be used by Wildlife Services to assist airport managers with alleviating wildlife hazards to aircraft and the traveling public. For the reasons indicated below, I have decided to select the proposed action as described in the EA and to issue a FONSI.

Alternative 1: Proposed Action and Integrated Wildlife Damage Management (Also the “No Action” Alternative)

The current integrated wildlife damage management (IWDM) program is the Proposed Action in the EA. This alternative provides an array of tools and management methods which may be selected to protect human safety, property, and human health from wildlife related hazards or threats at and around civilian airports in Hawaii. An IWDM approach will continue to be implemented under this alternative allowing for the use of legally available methods, either singly or in combination, to meet wildlife hazard management needs for reducing strikes or potential strikes. Airport managers requesting assistance would be provided information regarding the use of effective non-lethal and lethal techniques, as appropriate. Non-lethal methods and technical assistance instruction and advice can include hazing, environmental or habitat modification, decoy traps and other live traps, exclusionary devices, nest destruction, and alpha chloralose (a sedative used to capture waterfowl and pigeons). Lethal methods considered by Wildlife Services include: shooting, egg addling/destruction, snap traps, diphacinone, and American Veterinary Medical Association approved euthanasia techniques, such as CO² gas. All management actions will comply with appropriate laws, orders, policies, and regulations. Migratory Bird permits are provided by the USFWS after an independent review of the WS proposal.

Based on the analysis in the EA, the proposed alternative was found to have negligible commitments of irreversible and irretrievable resources (from the use of fossil fuels and electrical energy), and would not have any significant cumulative effects on wildlife populations including any protected species, including threatened and endangered or other native species and migratory birds. No endangered species have been killed at airports in Hawaii from Wildlife Services operations. Based on a consultation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildlife Services has concluded that airport wildlife hazard management activities would not be

likely to adversely affect threatened or endangered species. Wildlife Services also operates under a Section 10 permit which allows the program to haze endangered species off of airfields if they should create a hazard to air traffic safety. Hazing is considered to benefit the individual bird hazed. The proposed action generally benefits endangered species by preventing bird aircraft strikes. Wildlife Services may have localized impacts on non-native migratory birds on and around airfield, however it is unlikely to reduce overall populations of non-native birds on the islands. No regional migratory bird population effects are expected. The EA concluded that non native mammal populations would not be expected to be adversely affected, however any removals are considered to be potentially beneficial to Hawaii's ecosystem.

Alternative 2: Technical Assistance Alternative

The Technical Assistance alternative, as described in the EA, would allow WS to provide advice and recommendations to airport managers similar to the proposed action, but would not allow WS to directly implement actions. Wildlife Services would not affect any species under this alternative because it would provide no direct management. Because WS has no legal authority over the actions of others, it could not control the outcome and environmental consequences. The effects on target species by individuals outside of WS could be similar depending upon the skill and experience level of those receiving technical assistance and implementing the actions. Removing fewer individual animals or the wrong ones could result in higher risks to aviation safety. Since most species taken are non-native and abundant, the consequences of taking a higher number of individuals on airport properties would not be expected to affect regional populations of non-native species. Negative non-target effects on protected species could be higher. Wildlife Services would not affect any species under this alternative.

This alternative was not selected because it would be less effective than the Proposed Action by not allowing the program to best use its expertise to assist airport managers with managing wildlife strike hazards. The technical assistance alternative was determined to result in greater negative environmental consequences than the proposed action.

5. Public Involvement

Public participation in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for the pre-decision EA was conducted consistent with Wildlife Service's NEPA procedures. Issues related to the proposed action were identified from Wildlife Services, cooperating and consulting agency input, prior public involvement for similar EAs, and a 30-day public comment period for the pre-decision EA. The pre-decision EA was prepared in consultation with cooperating agencies and a pre-decisional EA was issued to the public in April 2007 via direct mailings to individuals and groups thought to be interested in the proposal, publication of legal notices in Honolulu Advertiser, notice in the Hawaii Office of Environmental Quality clearing house, and posting the document on the Wildlife Services NEPA web page at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/regulations/ws/ws_nepa_environmental_documents.shtml. One public comment was received as a result of the public outreach process. The comment was focused on the effects of the program on the black crowned night heron. As a result of the comment, WS revised the section on the effects of the black crowned night heron in the final EA,

to include efforts to reduce heron take through more comprehensive documentation of heron movement patterns for better risk analysis, and an evaluation of the potential for habitat modifications to make traditional foraging areas at the Honolulu International Airport less attractive to the herons

A notice of the availability of the final EA and this Decision and FONSI will be issued to the public in the same manners as the pre-decision EA.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT


A careful review of the final EA indicates that there will not be a significant impact on the quality of the human environment as a result of this proposal. I agree with this conclusion, and therefore, determine that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will not be prepared. This determination is based on consideration of the following factors:

1. The proposed activities will occur in localized areas within specific airport management zones in the State of Hawaii as requested by airport managers. The proposed activities are not national or regional in scope.
2. The proposed activities will not significantly affect public health and safety. The methods used to control wildlife at airports are target specific and are not likely to affect public health and safety. The proposed activities are intended to benefit human health and safety by alleviating threats from wildlife strikes with aircraft.
3. The proposed activities will not have an impact on unique characteristics of the geographic area such as historical or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecological critical areas. The nature of the methods proposed do not affect the physical environment.
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment of the proposed activities are not highly controversial. Although some people are opposed to some aspects of wildlife damage management, the methods and impacts are not controversial among experts.
5. The possible effects of the proposed activities on the quality of the human environment are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks.
6. The proposed activities do not establish a precedent for actions with future significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.
7. There are no significant cumulative effects identified by this assessment. Close coordination with wildlife management agencies, compliance with measures outlined in permits for taking migratory birds and hazing endangered species, and routine monitoring will help to ensure that the cumulative effects of the proposal would not adversely affect the viability of any wildlife populations in Hawaii or in the region.
8. The proposed activities will not affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places nor will it cause a loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. Wildlife damage management does not have the potential to affect historic properties.
9. The proposed activities will fully comply with the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. The proposed activities would either have no effect, or would not be likely to adversely affect federally listed threatened and endangered species. Wildlife Services

may have specific endangered species under a Section 10 permit if they are encountered as being a threat to air traffic safety.

10. There are no irreversible or irretrievable resource commitments identified by this assessment, except for a minor consumption of fossil fuels and electricity for routine operations.
11. The proposed activities will not threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

For additional information concerning this decision, please contact Mike Pitzler, State Director, USDA APHIS Wildlife Services, 3375 Koapaka St., Suite H-420, Honolulu, Hawaii 96819.



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Date